

COREL CorelDraw X3 Graphics Suite

★★★★★

£253 inc VAT (Educational price £100)

The CorelDraw graphics suite might play second fiddle to Adobe's Creative Suite, but Corel clearly hopes this latest version will do something to turn the tables. Price is a good place to start: Adobe's Creative Suite costs the best part of £1,000 and is aimed purely at professional designers.

That leaves a gap in the market for business users and others who need to do the occasional piece of computer graphics work but don't want to shell out for Adobe's professional products.

The new CorelDraw X3 Graphics Suite is well qualified to grab a slice of that market, as it provides a comprehensive set of photo-editing and drawing tools for less than half the price of its Adobe counterpart. The suite consists of two main programs: CorelDraw X3 for vector drawing and illustration work, and Photo-Paint X3 for photo editing. Both programs gain some useful new features in this upgrade, and Corel has fine-tuned a number of existing features to make them easier to use.

Photo-Paint has acquired two very handy new tools: the Image Adjustment Lab and the Cutout Lab. The Image Adjustment Lab enables you to adjust colour, brightness and contrast settings quickly. As well as displaying before and after versions of your photo, it can create a series of snapshots that use different image settings. This makes it easy to experiment with different settings and switch quickly from one version of your photo to another.

We also like the Cutout Lab, which you can use to cut around very fine details such as hair or fur in photographs. Most photo-editing programs provide a similar feature, but the Cutout Lab is easy to use and produced good results with very little effort on our part.

CorelDraw X3 receives its fair share of new features as well. Some of these are pretty minor, such as new options for drawing

stars, and it made us wonder why Corel took so long to include them in the suite in the first place.

Fortunately, other additions to CorelDraw X3 are more impressive. Previous versions of the suite included a separate tracing program for converting photographs into vector-based drawings. Corel has overhauled this and integrated it into CorelDraw itself. You can import a photo and use the Quick Trace option to convert the image automatically. The results are pretty good, but if you need a little more control over the process, you can select additional options such as Logo to produce line-art drawings for use as part of a company logo or letterhead.

There's also an excellent option for making text flow along irregular paths. Just draw the path, type some text and select the Text To Path command. As you move the mouse over the path, it displays a preview of the text flowing along it. You can also see how text would look above or below the path. It's one of the best text-manipulation tools we've seen in any graphics program.

In technical and creative terms, CorelDraw X3 Graphics Suite is undoubtedly a very strong upgrade. It will certainly appeal to small-business users who need an all-in-one graphics suite for producing brochures and other types of marketing material.

Even so, we're a little concerned about the price. It may be cheaper than Adobe's Creative Suite, but consumers and business users can still opt for less expensive products, such as Photoshop Elements, or hybrid photo and drawing programs, such as ACD's

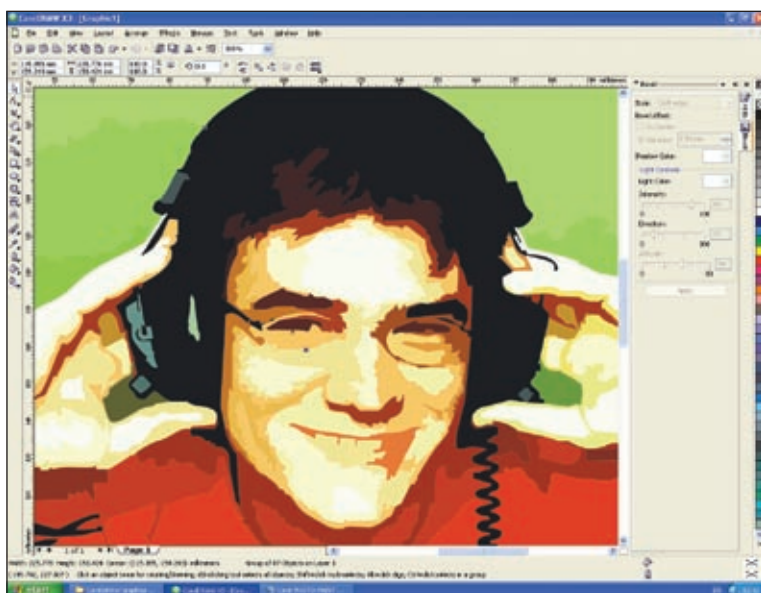
Canvas, both of which cost well under £100. The current price leaves it sitting somewhat awkwardly between the professional and business markets, and a more reasonable price would give CorelDraw X3 Graphics Suite a better foot in the door with business users.

Cliff Joseph

SUMMARY

- ✓ Versatile combination of tools
- ✗ More expensive than the competition

GRAPHICS SUITE Requires Windows 2000 or XP, 600MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 200MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE CORDR352
SUPPLIER www.macwarehouse.co.uk
DETAILS www.corel.co.uk



◀ With its new PowerTrace feature, CorelDRAW X3 can convert photos into vector-based illustrations

SOFTWARE

FAQ

Q Anti-virus software seems to be sold on a yearly subscription basis. Does this mean I have to buy a new version every year?

A The subscription you pay for your anti-virus software ensures that you continue to receive the latest virus-definition files. You're under no obligation to buy another year's subscription when your current one runs out, but you're putting your PC at risk if you don't, as your virus scanner will be unable to detect the latest threats.

Paying your subscription also gets you the latest version of the software. If you pay for your subscription online, you may even find that it's cheaper than buying the boxed copy.

If you decide that you would like to change anti-virus applications, simply don't renew your existing subscription. Just uninstall the current product you are running and install your new one in its place.

David Ludlow
Reviews Editor



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McAfee

Wireless Home Network Security 2006

★★★★

£35 inc VAT

Despite attempts to make wireless networks easier to configure and more secure, they're still quite difficult to use. McAfee's Wireless Home Network Security is designed to take the guesswork out of the process with one-click network security for all wireless networks.

According to McAfee, it does this by connecting to your access point (AP) automatically and configuring its settings. We were dubious of these claims, and we were right to be. Wireless Home Network Security can do this only with certain access points. Unless you have a supported one, the software fails and refuses to connect.

It's also important to have the right firmware revision. We had two Linksys WR54GS routers, but only one of them worked with this software. McAfee releases updates, but with so many models and firmware versions available it's hard to keep up.

If you have a supported access point, Network Security works really well. It automatically reconfigured our access point for secure WEP

access, which offers greater compatibility with older clients. However, you can force it to use the more secure WPA-PSK encryption if you prefer.

With both types of encryption, the software changes the key automatically after a standard interval. This means that if an intruder gets hold of the current key and joins your network, their network access will soon be terminated.

Network Security comes into its own when used with other PCs. You get five licences in the box, so you can install the software on all your PCs. Once you've created a secure network, other PCs can join it only if a PC currently on the network gives them permission. The software handles this automatically with pop-up windows, so it's very easy to deal with.

When another PC joins your network, it receives the key changes automatically. However, this works only with computers that can have the client installed on them, so other computers, such as Macs or games consoles, will not work with this system.

You can get around this by forcing Network Security not to rotate encryption

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy configuration of supported APs
- ✗ Doesn't change a router's password
- ✗ Doesn't support all networks

WIRELESS NETWORK SECURITY Requires Windows 98 or above, 133MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 50MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE NTS10U005RAA
SUPPLIER www.misco.co.uk
DETAILS www.mcafee.com



▲ If you have a supported access point, Wireless Home Network Security 2006 works well

keys, which will enable you to configure other clients for access to the network.

Of greater concern is the fact that Network Security doesn't automatically reconfigure the administrator's password for your wireless access point. You can do this manually, but the option is tucked away. The password is also displayed in plain text, so anyone with access to your PC can find out what it is.

If you find a network that isn't protected by McAfee, Network Security acts just like the Windows Wireless Zero Configuration client, except that it doesn't mask WEP and WPA-PSK keys by default, so those who can access your PC can read them. You can force it to mask these settings, but we think this should be automatic.

When it works, Network Security works really well and makes it much easier for other PCs to connect to a protected network. However, we found lots of unsupported routers in our labs, and you have to disable some of the security features if you want to use devices other than PCs. We'd rather configure our wireless settings manually.

David Ludlow

Also consider...

MICROSOFT Works Suite 2006

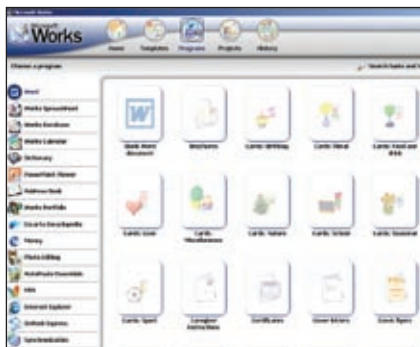
★★★★★

£69 inc VAT

BEST BUY Microsoft Office may be the obvious choice of office suite, but it's expensive for home users and a little business-focused. Microsoft has a more home-friendly range of software in Works Suite 2006, and all for well under £100.

The package contains Word, Digital Image Standard, Money, AutoRoute Essentials, Encarta and the organiser that glues them all together, Works. However, you get the older 2002 version of Word rather than the newer Word 2003. As the new version provides better security, more options for tracking document changes and mark-up features used to prepare content for professional databases, the presence of Word 2002 is a disappointment.

The other packages are well worth the money, though, and provide pretty much every function the average home user will need. Unless you intend to use your PC to run a small business, Works Suite is a stunning collection of software at a bargain price.



OFFICE SUITE Requires Windows 98 SE or above, 700MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 1.5GB disk space, Internet Explorer 6
PRODUCT CODE B11-01360 SUPPLIER www.dabs.com DETAILS www.microsoft.com/worksuite ✓ Includes Word and handy home software such as Encarta ✗ Old version of Word FULL REVIEW Mar 2006

SONY Vegas Movie Studio +DVD Platinum Edition 6

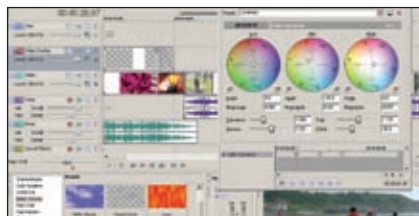
★★★★★

£99 inc VAT

BEST BUY Platinum Edition is new to the Vegas family and adds support for High-Definition Video cameras. With a range of new effects over the standard edition, including the excellent Colour Corrector, it's well worth the extra £15.

Movie Studio has finally caught up and even surpassed its rival, Adobe's Premiere Elements.

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 800MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 200MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE SPVMSDV6000 SUPPLIER SCV London 020 8418 1470 DETAILS www.sonymediasoftware.com ✗ Lots of powerful new features ✗ DVD Architect Studio might be bewildering for beginners FULL REVIEW Dec 2005



SYMANTEC Norton SystemWorks 2006

★★★★★

£50 VAT

Rather like a car, your computer requires the occasional tune-up to keep it running smoothly and in peak condition. Rather than having to take your PC in for a service, though, you can buy software, such as Symantec's Norton SystemWorks 2006, that does the job automatically.

SystemWorks is actually a suite of tools that are monitored and controlled through a single application. Each tool takes care of a different part of your system.

Norton AntiVirus is one of the best-known anti-virus products on the market, and the 2006 edition provides scheduled scans of your hard disk, as well as real-time protection from new threats. Detection levels are quite high, but we found that performing a full scan on our test computer brought it to a grinding halt, using almost 90 per cent of the processor's time. It also makes opening office documents very slow, as the scanner springs into action. You don't have to install Norton AntiVirus, though, so you can stick with your existing virus protection if you prefer.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Disk Doctor keeps your hard disk healthy
- ✓ GoBack is better than System Restore
- ✗ Cleanup deletes needed files

PC-TUNING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 or above, 300MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 170MB disk space PRODUCT CODE 10432775-
IN SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.symantec.co.uk

SystemWorks 2006 really comes into its own with its other tools. Norton Utilities has been around for a very long time, but it's as good as ever. Norton Disk Doctor in particular is head and shoulders above Windows' ScanDisk. It's more thorough and detects and fixes problems that ScanDisk simply gives up on. Win Doctor does a similar job for the Registry and Windows shortcuts to help keep your PC running without any glitches.

Norton System Doctor, however, is rather less useful. Its job is to monitor your computer and flag up warnings when it reaches given thresholds, such as when space is running low on the hard disk. Windows has similar tools built in, and Symantec's have no real advantage over these.

Norton GoBack is a little like Windows' System Restore, but it keeps track of more file information, so you can recover lost files as well. You can even start it before Windows loads, so you can roll back to a previous state if your computer won't start properly.

Finally, Norton Cleanup scans your PC for unwanted



▲ Disk Doctor is thorough and detects and fixes problems that ScanDisk gives up on

cookies, history entries, cache and temporary files, which proliferate on your computer when you browse the web. At least, that's the theory. The first time Cleanup ran automatically on our test PC it deleted all our history, cookies and cache information, all of which we wanted to keep. It even deleted our saved logon details for an Egg Money Manager account. You can choose which data to keep for each site in the configuration, but this is obviously of little use once it has already run.

Norton SystemWorks ties all these applications together. This utility warns you when it's due to run a system scan, and lets you see your PC's current level of protection at a glance. It's pretty easy to use, and having access to all these applications in one place is a good thing.

While Norton System Doctor is excellent, the software is marred by the slow anti-virus application and the lengthy uninstallation routine, which took a couple of hours on our PC. A slightly cheaper version without Norton AntiVirus and Cleanup would make this a much more attractive purchase.

David Ludlow

STEGANOS Internet Security 2006

★★★★★

£35 inc VAT



Steganos's Internet Security suite is a comprehensive bundle of utilities that aims to protect your computer against the main threats on the internet: viruses, hackers, spyware and spam.

The suite is a collection of separate applications that have been licensed individually from other developers. What's more, they all work really well. This package is an absolute bargain and is all you need to protect your PC.

INTERNET SECURITY SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 100MB disk space SUPPLIER [Steganos 00800 78342667](http://www.steganos.co.uk) DETAILS www.steganos.co.uk ✓ Top-class products at a great price ✗ Programs are not integrated FULL REVIEW Feb 2006



AVANQUEST RadioTracker Premium

★★★★★

£20 inc VAT



Finding new music and building a large MP3 collection is a difficult and expensive task. With Radiotracker Premium you can do both for just the cost of the software. It monitors internet radio stations that broadcast in MP3 format and downloads songs to your PC.

You have control over the genre and quality that you're interested in, but the music you'll get remains a surprise.

Only a few of our downloads were incomplete or had the start of another track at the end. As a way of grabbing new music, this is well worth the money.



MP3 RIPPING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 500MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 100MB disk space, broadband internet connection SUPPLIER [Avanquest 01752 895100](http://www.avanquest.co.uk) DETAILS www.avanquest.co.uk ✓ Gets lots of tracks quickly ✗ Some settings are confusing FULL REVIEW Apr 2006

ABLETON Live 5

★★★★★

£265 inc VAT



Ableton Live is an extraordinary piece of software, designed to help you produce your live performance. Its excellent Session View lets you trigger recorded clips on the fly, making the software more of an instrument than a recording platform. If you plan to perform on stage, there's no better choice than Live.

MUSIC PRODUCTION SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 600MHz processor, 512MB RAM PRODUCT CODE 28683 SUPPLIER www.gear4music.com DETAILS www.ableton.com ✓ Flexible performance tools ✗ Not the best for straightforward recording FULL REVIEW Nov 2005



MAGIX
Movie Edit Pro 10 Plus
★★★★
£40 inc VAT

With Movie Edit Pro 10 Plus, Magix has taken its feature-packed video-editing program and stuffed it with even more features. This latest version adds previews on a TV screen, which it routes through a DV camera connected by FireWire (which sounds complicated but it works), high-definition (HD) import and export, 3D transitions, automatic colour optimisation, two-layer DVD support, a jog/shuttle preview control and a huge list of other new tricks and tools.

It's good to see low-cost packages adopting HD, but we're still waiting to see one that gets it right. We managed to import a range of HD video formats, but the software rejected some files while accepting other, seemingly identical formats without problems. More problematic is the fact that Movie Edit Pro can't capture directly from HDV cameras. WMV HD export is included, although it's well hidden under the advanced export settings. The same is true of MPEG4 export; this useful feature is rare among editing packages, but many users won't even realise it's available.

The new 3D transitions are either spectacular or ridiculous

depending on your taste. Examples such as Heart, in which the outgoing clip curls up into a heart shape and floats out of view, certainly challenge the bounds of good taste, but others are technically impressive. They're far too over the top for most home-video productions but might suit pop videos or other creative projects.

Movie Edit calls on the graphics card's processor to render these transitions for smooth real-time previews, and preview quality is pretty good in general as long as you're happy with the small default monitor window. Previewing in full screen on a second computer monitor or TV screen over FireWire takes a heavy toll on the preview's smoothness, though.

Double-clicking a video clip on the timeline opens a new effect editor with tabs for colour correction, creative effect presets, transitions, movement and rotation. These are reasonably accessible and effective, but they serve only as an alternative interface for the existing effects, which are still available through the slightly baffling Video Controller window.

You can also access effect presets through the tabbed window to the right of the preview. With this method you can preview an

SUMMARY

- Jam-packed with features
- Overstuffed interface
- Limited effects control

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 SE/Me/2000/XP, 400MHz Pentium II processor, 64MB RAM (128MB recommended)
PRODUCT CODE 4017218605619
SUPPLIER www.savastore.com
DETAILS www.magix.com



▲ 1-Click Optimisation isn't as fast or as effective as its name suggests

effect instantly without having to apply it, and double-clicking or dragging an effect applies it permanently. Sadly, though, this freedom to access effects by various routes complicates rather than simplifies the proceedings, and keyframe animation for automating parameter changes is just as untidy and confusing.

Magix Movie Edit Pro 10 Plus can be frustrating if you're the sort of person who needs quick, precise tools with which to execute your ideas. If, on the other hand, you prefer to experiment and let your ideas develop according to what the software can do, there's plenty here to keep you entertained, and the results often look excellent. However, you'll also need to invest quite a bit of time in familiarising yourself with the software's interface. With experience, Movie Edit Pro can be quick to use, but those new to this area of computing are likely to feel overwhelmed by all the options and overlapping editing modes.

Ben Pitt

Also consider...
SYMANTEC
Norton Ghost 10
★★★★★
£35 inc VAT

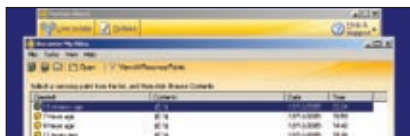

It stands to reason that, at some point, your PC will go wrong and you'll need to turn to backups to get it working again. Symantec's Norton Ghost 10 aims to make this task as easy as possible.

For starters, it automatically makes a complete image of your PC, operating system and all. When you restore an image, you get all your data and all your settings back the way you want them.

These files can be large, so Ghost 10 introduces scheduled incremental backups, where only those files that have changed are saved. It's an essential program for PC owners.

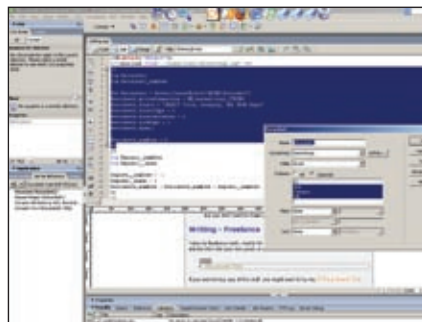
DISK-IMAGING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 300MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 160MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE 10439689-IN
SUPPLIER www.savastore.com
DETAILS www.symantec.co.uk

Powerful and easy to use Restore CD changed our system clock **FULL REVIEW** Apr 2006


MACROMEDIA
Dreamweaver 8
★★★★★
£316 inc VAT


If you have anything to do with developing professional websites, Dreamweaver 8 is the best £316 you'll ever spend. Miles ahead of the competition, it has everything. Whether you design the look of a site or incorporate dynamic data, Dreamweaver has the tools you need. It's too expensive for the home user, though.

WEB-DESIGN SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP, 800MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 650MB disk space, 1,024x768-pixel display
SUPPLIER www.dabs.com
DETAILS www.macromedia.com
 Improved CSS interface Too expensive for most home users **FULL REVIEW** Dec 2005


SERIF
PagePlus 11
★★★★★
£100 inc VAT


The latest version of Serif's PagePlus maintains the high quality set by previous incarnations. The best new feature is the ability to work directly with PDFs, which you can open, edit and save just as if they were native PagePlus documents.

The program also handles missing fonts well, which is an excellent feature for anyone who swaps and shares lots of documents. A tidy new user interface rounds off an excellent package.

DTP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 or above, Pentium processor, 64MB RAM, 240MB disk space
SUPPLIER Serif
0800 376 7070
DETAILS www.serif.com
 PDF import feature Takes a while to master and tutorials aren't interactive **FULL REVIEW** Feb 2006



MAGIX Audio Cleaning Lab 10 Deluxe

★★★★★

£29 inc VAT



Magix Audio Cleaning Lab is quite a peculiar piece of software. It performs admirably in its intended role of recording vinyl, cassettes and other antiquated musical media to PC, cleaning them up and burning them to CD. However, it's equally well suited to the more substantial role of preparing your own music productions and video soundtracks for public consumption.

The main Cleaning and Mastering tools, which remove unwanted noises and optimise those you do want, are largely unchanged since the previous version (reviewed in *What's New, Shopper* February 2005), as are the excellent audio CD-authoring features. The effects perform respectably when used in moderation, although it's a shame that their order is fixed and that the volume metering doesn't clearly show when the output is distorting. The new addition to the mastering effects suite is Tape Simulation, which adds small amounts of harmonic distortion to give warmth and sizzle to recordings.

The most impressive new feature in version 10

is Spectral Cleaning. While the existing cleaning tools remove background noise and the characteristic crackles of vinyl, Spectral Cleaning removes prominent bumps, coughs, rattles and other unwanted acoustic noises that can creep into recordings. This isn't much use when transferring vinyl to CD, but for music and video production it can be fantastically useful.

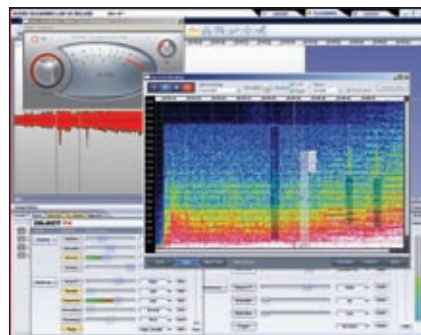
The Spectral Cleaning window shows a graphical representation of the audio, with time and frequency on two axes and colour indicating volume. This makes it easy to identify unwanted sounds, and simply drawing a box around them makes them practically disappear. This feature is easy to use, but the underlying processing is phenomenally complex. Removing a loud sound while leaving the quieter sounds behind it intact is extremely difficult and, although cleaned areas

sometimes sound a little odd, the fact that it works as well as it does is quite amazing. Comparable products that provide this function alone cost thousands of pounds. Still, it would be even better if it displayed frequency logarithmically rather than linearly, as lower

SUMMARY

- ✓ Superb audio-optimisation tools
- ✓ Excellent value
- ✗ Effect chain order is fixed

AUDIO RESTORATION Requires Windows 98 SE/Me/2000/XP, 450MHz processor, 64MB RAM
PRODUCT CODE MAG0010
SUPPLIER www.magix.com
DETAILS www.magix.com



▲ Spectral Cleaning washes the parts that other noise-reduction techniques cannot reach

frequencies are bunched up at the bottom. As it works destructively on the original file, it's also easy to make mistakes you can't rectify later. We recommend that you make a copy of any audio file before you apply Spectral Cleaning to it.

Other new features include the ability to export to DVD, either in the DVD Video format or in four-channel surround sound in DVD Audio format. This allows you to fit up to six hours of audio on a single disc, and while this is rather unorthodox as a distribution medium, it could be useful for sound installations.

Audio Cleaning Lab remains well suited to its primary role of cleaning vinyl, tapes and other old recordings and burning them to CD, but it seems that Magix can't help but pack the software with features that are far more sophisticated than this relatively straightforward task requires. The result is an indispensable suite of tools for musicians and video producers at an amazingly affordable price.

Ben Pitt

Also consider...

3AM LABS LogMeIn

★★★★★

Free; Professional edition \$13 (around £7) per month



If you've ever needed to access your PC while you've been away, LogMeIn is just the software for you. The free version gives you full remote control of your PC over the internet and works brilliantly.

The Professional version adds support for file transfers and guest invitations, and lets you use email to send links to files on your PC. It's an excellent piece of software for anyone who does a lot of remote work.

REMOTE CONTROL SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 or above, Internet Explorer, broadband internet connection
SUPPLIER www.3amlabs.com **DETAILS** www.logmein.com
✓ Simple remote control of a PC ✗ Java application not very fast **FULL REVIEW** Sep 2005



MOZILLA Firefox 1.0

★★★★★

Free

Firefox 1.0 is by far the best web browser that we have ever used. Introducing advanced features such as tabbed browsing and support for RSS feeds, it leaps and bounds ahead of Microsoft's Internet Explorer. When you also consider that it's better at rendering pages and is free, there's little excuse not to use it.

WEB BROWSER Requires Windows 98 or above, 500MHz Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 52MB disk space
SUPPLIER www.getfirefox.com ✓ Improved secure browsing
✗ Doesn't work with all websites **FULL REVIEW** Feb 2005



ADOBE Photoshop Elements 4.0

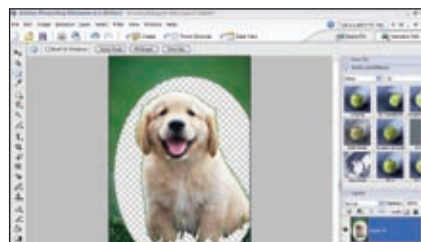
★★★★★

£68 inc VAT; upgrade £58



The latest version of Photoshop Elements blows the competition away. It has stunning new organisation features, including the ability to search for photos that contain people's faces. With the best range of editing features on the market and a low price, this program is one for all photo-editing enthusiasts.

PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP, 800MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 800MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE AD07071A **SUPPLIER** www.microanvika.com **DETAILS** www.adobe.co.uk
✓ Impressive photo-editing tools ✗ Clunky online help system **FULL REVIEW** Jan 2006



FASTHOSTS

Goodlink Mobile Email

★★★★★

£5.86 a month inc VAT

Fasthosts' Goodlink Mobile Email brings Blackberry-like facilities to your existing Microsoft-based smartphone, such as Orange's SPV C500, which we used for testing.

Before you can get Goodlink, there are a few prerequisites. First, you need to have an email or web-hosting account with Fasthosts. Then you have to upgrade the email account that you want to use remotely to an Exchange account. This costs £7.04 a month but includes a free copy of Outlook 2003 and gives you web-based access to your emails and contacts.

Finally, you have to subscribe to Goodlink Mobile Email, which costs £5.86 a month. This brings the service to a total cost of £13 per month plus your existing email or web hosting charges. Still, it compares favourably with what Vodafone and T-Mobile charge for Blackberry, and you get to use your existing email account.

Next, you have to install the Goodlink

software on your mobile. Fasthosts provides all the download instructions, and you simply navigate to the given web address on your mobile to download Goodlink. This failed the first time we tried it, as the application wasn't signed properly for

our Orange handset (handsets from other mobile operators won't have this problem). However, Fasthosts fixed the problem in a matter of hours, so it should work with all Orange smartphones. Check the website for compatibility with your phone before you buy, though.

Once you've entered your unique user number, your phone automatically connects to your Exchange mailbox using GPRS or 3G. Goodlink then takes over your mobile and replaces the standard Contacts and Phone dialler application with its own.

You can use T9 predictive text to search for contacts, but Goodlink won't search contacts stored on your handset; it searches only those entered into your Exchange account. If you haven't entered any, the easiest way is to start Outlook 2003 and copy the entire contents from your desktop to your Exchange account. Your phone will synchronise the data

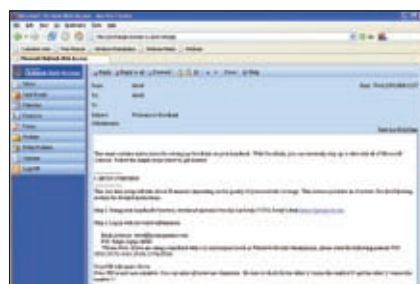
automatically and store a local copy so that you don't waste GPRS bandwidth while you're on the move.

The phone dialler application works in the same way as Microsoft's, but Goodlink's is American and formats all numbers in the American way, with

SUMMARY

- ✓ Instant access to your email
- ✓ Fast
- ✗ Reduces battery life

MOBILE EMAIL Requires Fasthosts Exchange Email, Microsoft Smartphone
SUPPLIER www.fasthosts.co.uk
DETAILS www.fasthosts.co.uk



▲ Get your mail on your mobile while you're on the move with Goodlink Mobile Email

dashes between dialling codes. This can be a little confusing when you're dialling a new number.

The service pushes emails to your handset automatically and you get an audible notification when you receive an email. Delivery times and email access were fast, and responding to an email was just as quick.

However, your phone relies on a GPRS or 3G connection, which is dropped if there's no traffic. Our phone took a while to reconnect when this happened, so not all emails arrived instantly. What's more, using GPRS all the time reduced the battery life to the point where our phone wouldn't last all weekend without a charge, so you'll have to carry your charger around with you. Finally, there's no quick way to turn the service off. To remove Goodlink you have to reset your phone, which wipes all data stored on it.

The service isn't perfect and Goodlink could do with being tailored for the UK, but it's an excellent way of getting email on the move without having to buy any new hardware.

David Ludlow

WEBSITE PROS

NetObjects Fusion 9

★★★★★

£135 inc VAT

Website design software usually falls into one of two categories: simple software for home users or advanced software for businesses. NetObjects Fusion is an exception. It's easy to use but is best suited to small business sites.

Unlike editors such as Macromedia's Dreamweaver, which allows you to work directly with the HTML code that makes up each page, Fusion turns your page design into code just before it is published. You can view the code that makes up each page and add lines to it if you wish, but you can't edit or tweak the code that the software creates.

This will be of little concern to anyone creating their first website. The Site Wizard allows you to select a design template and choose the pages you need, followed by a product list and a page of contact information. You can choose a rough layout for each page or just accept the defaults. Once you have entered some simple information, such as your business address, Fusion creates the entire site ready for

you to customise with text and images. When you're happy with each page, you can upload it to your web server using the publish button.

We've always been impressed by Fusion's simple online shop tool. This integrates with a number of online store services, including those provided by 1and1.co.uk and PayPal, and you can set them up in a matter of seconds. It won't rival Amazon, but if you want to sell just a handful of products with the minimum of fuss, it'll suffice.

Unfortunately, anyone with experience in web design is likely to find Fusion frustrating and limiting. Although it has many templates, none looks very professional, and many use garish colours. The templates didn't validate properly as HTML 4.0 Transitional and, when we examined the HTML output options, we were amazed to

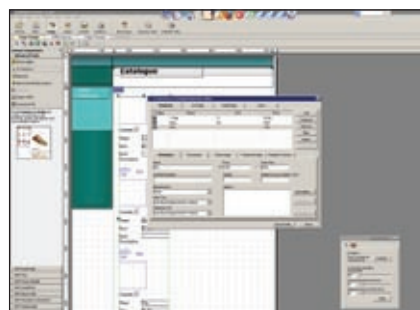
see it included compatibility modes for two completely outdated browsers: Internet Explorer 4 and Netscape Navigator 4. There's no option to use the more modern CSS positioning method for page layout.

Creating your own layout from scratch isn't

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy design for beginners
- ✗ More advanced users will find it limiting

WEB-DESIGN SOFTWARE Requires Pentium III processor, 250MB disk space, 256MB RAM, Internet Explorer 6
SUPPLIER www.netobjects.co.uk
DETAILS www.netobjects.co.uk



▲ Fusion makes it easy to add a simple online shop using a payment service such as PayPal

easy. Opting to start with a blank page brings up a page that's annoyingly far from blank, with an ugly header, two navigation bars and a dubious green tinge at the side. Removing these elements requires a trip to the style chooser, where you create your custom site style. As with the 'blank' page, this new style isn't really blank either, so to get a really fresh start you'll have to edit it.

There are a few things we like about Fusion 9. It's very simple for beginners, and you can generate a small business site with a PayPal shop without knowing much more than the login details for your web server. In most respects, though, Fusion 9 hasn't advanced far, and some of its features are stuck in the past. Beginners should consider it, but anyone else is better off using the expensive Dreamweaver or the free Notepad (www.notepad.org).

Tom Royal

COREL WordPerfect Office X3 Standard

★★★★

£214 inc VAT

Corel's WordPerfect Office suite has been long overdue a revamp, but X3 has finally arrived, just ahead of Microsoft's Office upgrade. We've tested the Standard version, which includes WordPerfect X3, the Quattro Pro X3 spreadsheet and Presentations X3. It's almost £100 cheaper than Microsoft's Office, too.

Corel also sells a Professional Edition, which adds Paradox X3, a relational database, and Microsoft's Visual Basic for Applications. The Home edition costs just £70 but lacks the Presentation application. Finally, for those who qualify, there's the Student and Teacher edition.

As this update has been such a long time coming, the list of enhanced features alone would fill this page. Many are minor alterations, such as a toolbar word count button, but the list of genuinely new stuff is a bit shorter.

PDF handling is a significant step forward. Corel introduced PDF export several versions back, but X3 now imports PDFs and lets you edit them, too. In practice, it's not that good. While you can copy text and objects from PDFs, the format's limitations mean the process isn't always effective. It works well enough with imported presentations, for example, but try to work

on more complex documents, such as spreadsheets, and you'll end up with gibberish.

The individual applications in this suite are effective alternatives to their Microsoft rivals. WordPerfect X3 retains its neat Shadow Cursor, which enables you to click and type anywhere on the page. The page display, complete with fine margin guides, gives you a much better sense of writing on sheets of paper than Word's. There's an option to remove metadata when saving files, which prevents colleagues and contacts seeing potentially embarrassing content embedded during the authoring and reviewing process.

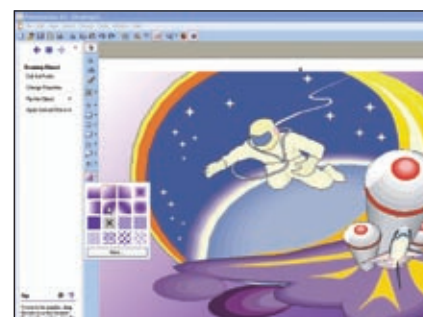
However, while WordPerfect offers outline lists, these are not the same as Word's extremely powerful Outline document view. WordPerfect is excellent for shorter, WYSIWYG documents, but authors of longer works are likely to prefer Word's solid content-structuring approach.

There's less to say about Quattro Pro X3. Few people use the full power of their spreadsheet applications anyway and Quattro Pro, like Excel, offers more functions and analytical tools than you are ever likely to need. It offers CrossTab data analysis to match Excel's PivotTables, and also includes Excel file compatibility.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Cheaper than Office 2003 Standard
- ✓ PDF import and export
- ✗ Tired templates and crude graphics
- ✗ Worrying macro scripting errors

OFFICE SUITE Requires Windows 98 SE or above, 466MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 575MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE WPX3STDENGPC
SUPPLIER www.microwarehouse.co.uk
DETAILS www.corel.co.uk



▲ Presentation Graphics X3 is the suite's standalone graphics editor, though it's really a repackaged variant of Presentations X3

Presentations X3 isn't as appealing as PowerPoint. According to the manual, the anti-aliasing has been enhanced in this version. In our tests, though, graphics drawn directly on slides or those from existing templates remained resolutely jagged.

WordPerfect Office X3 also comes with a new WordPerfect Mail program, but who needs another email application? This one has powerful anti-spam tools (from SAproxy Pro) and calendar functions, but it's not in the same league as Outlook. Some might find it more basic, and hence simpler, features appealing, though.

Finally, there's an OfficeReady template browser, and Presentations Graphics X3, which provides the suite's core drawing tools, is now available as a standalone application that you can access through the Start menu.

We were left with the feeling that everything is better but not much is actually new, which is rather a disappointment. WordPerfect Office X3 is cheaper than Microsoft Office but not really any better. It does the job, but it looks dated and crude by comparison.

Rod Lawton

LAPBACK LapBack 2.0

★★★★★

£25 inc VAT download; £30 inc VAT
CD version

Notebook users typically back up their machines only when they're safely at home, and not while they're carrying them around. LapBack 2.0 aims to change that by providing a simple way of backing up your data to USB flash drives wherever you are.

This is one of the simplest backup products we've ever used. The first time you start the program it asks you to provide a password before opening the main application. By default the program selects My Documents, Outlook and Outlook Express folders for backup. It's a little strange that it selects both Outlook and Outlook Express, though, as most people use one or the other.

You can elect to back up additional folders by selecting Add new item or right-clicking any folder in

Windows Explorer and choosing the correct option. You can also drag and drop folders directly into the application.

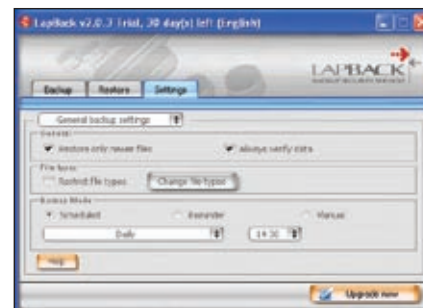
Next, you plug in a USB flash drive and, once your notebook has detected it and installed the drivers, click on the Backup button. LapBack then encrypts the selected files and stores them on the USB flash drive.

If no drive is inserted, LapBack presents a rather convoluted error message that says "Path does not exist or is invalid". A message telling you that there's no USB key would be more useful. If you prefer, you can back up to a CD or DVD drive, a network location or another folder, although this last option rather defeats the object of backing up your files so that you have a copy if your notebook breaks or is stolen.

SUMMARY

- ✓ Very simple to use
- ✓ Lets you back up data on the road
- ✗ Error messages are hard to understand

BACKUP SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 or above, 128MB RAM, 200MHz processor, 10MB disk space
SUPPLIER LapBack 01494 881722
DETAILS www.lapback.com



▲ LapBack lets you back up to USB flash drives, so you can save your data wherever you are

LapBack provides the usual options for scheduling backups, and icons in Windows Explorer indicate whether your marked folders have files that need backing up. The software keeps only one copy of each file, so it writes new versions of your files over your existing backup. If you want to keep different versions of your files, you can use multiple USB flash drives.

This software is incredibly easy to use and allows notebook users to back up their data, even if they're in the middle of nowhere. However, you'll need a USB drive that's at least as big as the data you want to save, and a spare drive or two if you want to save multiple versions of files.

David Ludlow